

Writer's Craft/Persuasive Language Techniques

1. **Direct address:** 'I ask you.' Or 'I don't see a bright future for them; do you?'

This engages the reader in the essay and therefore retains their interest and concentration because the material seems directly relevant to them.

2. **Indirect involvement:** 'Now imagine/think of...'

3. **Graphic language:** This paints a picture for the reader and may be manipulated to generate hostility, fear, pity, or whatever emotion is most effective to promote your argument. Metaphors can be very useful because they enable you to paint pictures and also say a lot through their connotations. Tony Blair talked of his aspiration for Britain to be a 'beacon' to the world. This has a lot of positive associations.

4. **Emotive language:** '...the horrendous slaughter of the defenceless little fox.'

It is impossible to read this without feeling that fox-hunting is barbaric. Emotive language allows the writer to control the reader's response. Look out for more subtle examples: 'These children robbed of their innocence...'. The verb 'robbed' makes us feel that an injustice has been done.

5. **Hyperbole** (exaggerate key points) – 'School uniforms are a torture.'

6. **Rhetorical questions:** 'Do we really want £758 million spent on a ridiculous dome that will be pulled down in a mere six years?'

Rhetorical questions are not used to ask for an opinion, rather to emphasise a point.

7. **Create a rapport with your readers:** 'Friends/fellow classmates...'

This creates the illusion that they are on the same side as you so psychologically makes it more difficult for them to disagree with you.

8. **Assertive language:** 'It is well known that ...'

This makes your point seem indisputable. It also makes your opinion sound like it is widespread belief.

9. **Repetition:** 'A world that is free from terrorism. A world that is free from murder. A world that is free from hatred. That is the world we all long for.'

This gives drama and impact. Many politicians and effective public speakers employ repetition. Martin Luther King's famous 'I have a dream' speech is a good example.

10. **Groups of three (triplets):** 'Education, education, education' (Tony Blair's mantra).

This can be the same three words or different words. Rhetorically it is very effective. Three sentences which are very similar structurally also work well.

11. **Alliteration:** Repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words which are in close succession. This makes the point more memorable.

12. **Appeal to greater authority:** 'Scientists now believe that...' or 'Recent surveys suggest that...'. This adds credibility to what you are saying and can be used to make opinion sound like fact.

13. **Quotations:** These show you have done extensive research and again add credibility to your argument.
14. **Statistics:** ‘Every second, twelve square kilometres of rainforest is being cut down; eighty percent of this is ...’.

This provides a factual basis for your argument. Try to have a range of facts and opinions in your essay.

15. **Expose the weaknesses in opposing arguments:** ‘You may say that...and you would be right, but...’ or ‘Computers will lead to more leisure time but what about the unemployment problems that they will create?’

This shows that your opinion is not one grounded in ignorance or naivety; you are aware of contrary perspectives and have well considered objectives to them. This strengthens your argument.

16. **Humour:** (If appropriate) lightens the tone, establishes a closer rapport between you and the reader and adds variety, which in turn, helps maintain interest.
17. **Personal anecdote:** This may convince the reader of the authenticity of your views but, like humour, use wisely and sparingly.
18. **Tone:** Adapt your tone according to the point you are making and the reaction you want to generate in the reader. Will you be indignant, angry, shocked, disgusted, sad, happy, calm or reflective?

Presentational Devices

Remember to always explain the effect on the reader.

- **Layout** can be used to aid understanding and to make the piece more eye-catching
- Catchy/Eye-catching **titles** capture the reader's attention
- **Colour** adds eye-appeal, impact and emphasis
- Different **font styles and sizes** are important in attracting and directing the reader's eye
- **Headlines**, captions and sub-headings add impact and clarity
- **White space** creates clarity and attractiveness
- **Bulleted** or numbered lists aid clarity
- **Formatting:** bold, italic and underline can create emphasis and impact
- **A logo** can create a high level of trust in a product or service, e.g. 'Coca Cola'
- **Illustrations** and photographs add interest, clarity and emotional impact
- **Graphs** and **charts** ease understanding (but can be very selective in what they show)
- **Cartoons** add humour and attract attention
- **Maps** may be helpful in certain cases

There are three main reasons for using presentational devices:

1. **Mood**
2. **Memory**
3. **Clarity**

1. Mood

A piece of writing will always try to express feelings. The mood created could be fun and excitement (in a brochure for a theme park for example) or perhaps fear and concern (in an advice sheet about road safety or global warming for example). The feelings should always be in tune with the target audience.

Devices to look out for in mood:

- pictures
- fonts
- colour

2. Memory

If the main purpose of a piece of non-fiction writing is **to inform**, then it is important that readers find and remember key bits of information. These can include website addresses or phone numbers, advice or statistics.

Devices to look out for that are used to aid memory:

- bold text
- headlines and sub-headings
- bullet points
- diagrams, maps and illustrations

3. Clarity

Most non-fiction texts are written for people in a hurry, so it is important that **the purpose and audience of a text is clear**. This will make the right people pick it up and read it. The information within the text also needs to be clearly presented otherwise people will stop reading.

Devices to look out for to aid clarity:

- bold text
- bullet points
- sub-headings
- paragraphs
- colour
- images and captions